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10-20-67 Saigon 9069

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ACTION EA 19

INFO GPM 03,SC 01,RSC 01,USIA 12,H 02,NSC 10,L 03,INR 07,P 04,CIA 04,
DOD 01,SP 02,SS 20,IO 21,SAL 01,AID 30,RSR 01,NSAE 00,/142 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9222
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4621
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG 1155
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2807

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 9069

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS: BINH DINH

REF: SAIGON 6837

1. REFTEL REPORTED BASIC BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON THE 78 CANDIDATES WHO INITIALLY FILED FOR THE LOWER HOUSE FROM BINH DINH. BINH DINH HAS SIX LOWER HOUSE SEATS, A SHARP INCREASE FROM THE THREE SEATS ALLOTTED TO THE PROVINCE IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. THE INCREASE IN REGISTERED VOTERS FROM 198,000 IN SEPTEMBER 1966 TO 302,000 IN SEPTEMBER 1967 IS RESPONSIBLE.

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2. SIXTY CANIDATES REMAIN IN THE RACE AS OF OCTOBER 16. AMONG THE FIFTEEN LEADING CONTENDERS, MOST OF WHOM ARE BACKED EITHER BY THE PROVINCIAL UNITED BUDDHIST

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ASSOCIATION OR THE CATHOLIC GREATER SOLIDARITY FORCES, TWO APPEAR TO HAVE THE BEST CHANCE OF VICTORY: CATHOLIC TRAN LOC AND BUDDHIST LE VAN THA.

3. THE FOLLOWING WERE REJECTED BY THE LOCAL ELECTION COUNCIL FOR INCOMPLETE DOSSIERS:

CHAU VAN SUYEN
NGUYEN DINH TUC
LE DINH CAI
VO QUOC SU
VO QUI THE
PHAM XUAN ANG
ON NINH TINH
NGUYEN CONG BIEN

4. TWO CANDIDATES, NGUYEN HUOT AND HUYNH VAN TRAN, WERE ELIMINATED FOR BEING PRO-VIET CONG. HUOT WAS ELECTED TO THE PROVINICAL COUNCIL IN 1965 BUT VANISHED MYSTERIOUSLY SOON AFTER. HE WAS PICKED UP EARLIER THIS YEAR DURING

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A FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION OPERATION IN THE MOUNTAINS OF BINH DINH WHERE HE WAS ALLEGEDLY PERFORMING FORCED LABOR FOR THE VIET CONG. DOUBTS OF HUOT'S LOYALTY REMAIN, HOWEVER, SINCE BEFORE HIS DISAPPEARANCE HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO TRAVEL FREELY INTO AREAS WHERE NO OTHER GVN OFFICIAL DARED SET FOOT. HUOT APPEALED TO THE CENTRAL ELECTION COUNCIL AND LOST. DETAILS OF HUYNH VAN TRAN'S REJECTION ARE NOT KNOWN; HE ALSO APPEALED TO THE CEC AND LOST.

5. THE FOLLOWING CANDIDATES HAVE WITHDRAWN SICNE THE SECOND POSTING:

HOANG TRONG CHAU
VO HUY TON
VAN HOANG
DANG CONG TOAN

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VU DAN BINH
DOAN VAN THOM
NGUYEN VAN TRUNG
THAN TRONG NOI

6. THE FORMAL CAMPAIGN BEGAN VERY SLOWLY. THE UN-

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WIELDY LOCAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE, WHICH INCLUDES ALL 60 CANDIDATES, BECAME BOGGED DOWN THROUGH THE FIRST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN BY DISPUTES AMONG MEMBERS OVER THE SCHEDULING OF PUBLIC RALLIES AND A DISAGREEMENT WITH THE SPECIAL COMMISSARIAT FOR ADMINISTRATION (SCA) ON HOW GVN CAMPAIGN SUBSIDIES TO THE CANDIDATES WOULD BE DISTRIBTUED. AFTER MUCH DELAY, THE COMMITTEE DECIDED PUBLIC RALLIES WOULD BEGIN OCTOBER 14; ALL CANDIDATES WERE ALLOTTED THREE MINUTES TO SPEAK. (ONE CANDIDATE QUIPPED THAT THREE MINUTES WAS JUST ENOUGH TIME FOR THE AUDIENCE TO DETECT FROM THE SPEAKERS ACCENT HIS "FOREIGN" OR LOCAL ORIGIN.) TO OFFSET THE LACK OF CONTACT WITH THE VOTERS WHICH THE HUGE FIELD OF CANDIDATES PREVENTS, MOST CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN MAKING PRIVATE POLITICKING TRIPS INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE.

7. THERE HAD BEEN SOME ARGUMENT OVER CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURES. IN BINH DINH, THE GVN BUDGETARY SUBVENTION FOR EACH CANDIDATES CAMPAIGN COSTS IS ABOUT 100,000 PIASTERS. UNDER PREVIOUS PROCEDURES, THE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES DISBURSED ALL FUNDS FOR PRINTING

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POSTERS AND LEAFLETS, TRANSPORTATION, AND SALARIES OF ELECTION DAY OBSERVERS, ETC. --DIRECTLY. THIS EFFECTIVELY PREVENTED THE LESS SCRUPULOUS CANDIDATES FROM POCKETING SOME OF THESE FUNDS, BUT THE BUREAUCRATIC INEFFICIENCY OF PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES ALSO HINDERED THE PROCUREMENT OF NECESSARY SERVICES. CANDIDATES THERE-

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FORE REQUESTED SCA IN SAIGON TO AUTHORIZE EACH CANDIDATE TO RECEIVE 50,000 PIASTERS DIRECTLY; SCA FINALLY RELENTED TO EXTENT OF AUTHORIZING PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES TO REIMBURSE CANDIDATES DIRECTLY FOR CAMPAIGN EXPENSES UP TO 50,000 PIASTERS -- IF THE CANDIDATE CONCERNED COULD PRODUCE PROOF THAT THE EXPENDITURE HAD BEEN ACTUALLY MADE, AND HAD BEEN FOR LEGITIMATE CAMPAIGN PURPOSES.

8. THE LEADING CANDIDATES:

A. WEALTHY BUDDHIST LAYMAN LE VAN THA, REPRESENTATIVE FOR AIR VIET NAM IN QUI NHON, HEADS A STRONG GROUP OF CANDIDATES BACKED BY THE PRO-THICH TRI QUANG PROVINCAL UNITED BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION. ALSO BACKED BY THE UBA ARE DOAN DINH DUONG, CHIEF OF CABINET

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OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR; PHAM QUANG CANH, A BINH DINH-BORN POLICE OFFICIAL IN SAIGON; AND NGUYEN VAN PHUNG, A RETIRED CHIEF OF THE PROVINCIAL LAND SERVICE. OF THESE FOUR, THA APPEARS TO HAVE THE WIDEST APPEAL OUTSIDE THE BUDDHIST COMMUNITY. IN FACT, FATHER NGUYEN SO, LEADER OF BINH DINH'S CATHOLICS, REMARKED THAT HE HOPED THA WOULD WIN. THA'S BUDDHIST CREDENTIAL ARE MARRED BY AN INCIDENT THAT OCCURRED IN 1963 SOON AFTER HE HAD BEEN ELECTED TO THE OLD NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. ON THE DAY OF PRESIDENT DIEM'S ASSASSINATION, A HOSTILE CROWD DISCOVERED THA IN THE HUE HOME OF NGO DINH CAN, DIEM'S BROTHER AND LEADER OF THE CENTRAL VIETNAMESE BRANCH OF THE CAN LAO PARTY. THA HAS NEVER SATISFACTORILY EXPLAINED HIS PRESENCE THERE. THE BUDDHIST LAY LEADERS WHO BACK HIM HOPE THAT THE INCIDENT IS LARGELY FORGOTTEN BY NOW. BUNKER

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INFO GPM 03, SC 01, RSC 01, USIA 12, H 02, NSC 10, L 03, INR 07, P 04, CIA 04,
DOD 01, SP 02, SS 20, IO 21, SAL 01, AID 30, NSAE 00, RSR 01, /142 W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9223
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4622
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 9069 SECTION II OF II

B. DOAN DINH DUONG, LIKE THA ORIGINALLY FROXDHUE, WAS AMONG THE FIRST GVN OFFICIALS TO ENTER BINH DINH IN 1954 AFTER THE VIET MINH ABANDONED CONTROL OF CENTRAL VIET NAM IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE GENEVA ACCORDS. DUONG ORGANIZED AND RAN THE PROVINICAL FINANCIAL SERVICE UNTIL 1957 WHEN HE RAN FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FRO PHU YEN PROVINCE. HE SERVED TWO TERMS FROM 1958-63. FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS DUONG HAS BEEN CHEF DE CABINET OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR IN SAIGON.. DUONG IS SELF ADMITTED FORMER MEMBER OF THE CAN LAO PARTY, A FACT

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WHICH CAUSED HIM CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT IN THE CAMPAIGN. NEVERTHEPJSS, THE PROVINCIAL UBA IS BACKING HIM STRONGLY AND HIS GOOD FRIEND NGUYEN GIA PHUOC, THE RESPECTED SEC- RETARY OF THE LOCAL UBA, HAS BEEN ACCOMPANYING HIM ON CAMPAIGN TRIPS.

C. NGUYEN VAN PHUNG, WHO RETIRED TWO YEARS AGO FROM THE

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PROVINICAL LAND SERVICE, HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE BINH DINH UBA COUNCIL FOR MANY YEARS.

D. PHAM QUANG CANH, IS NOW WORKING AT THE NATIONAL POLICE TRAINING CENTER IN SAIGON. HE, LIKE LE VAN THA, IS REGARDED AS A MODERATE BUDDHIST BY CATHOLICS, IN AN ELECTIONS IN WHICH PLACE OF BIRTH HAS BECAME AN ISSUE, BUNH DINH BORN NGUYEN VAN PHUNG AND PHAM QUANG CANH HAVE A CERTAIN ADVANTAGE OVER THA AND DUONG, BOTH FROM HUE.

9. THE CATHOLIC GREATER SOLIDARITY FORCES (GSF) WHICH COMMAND THE LOYALTY OF THE BULK OF BINH DINH'S 35,000 CATHOLIC VOTERS, HAS TENTATIVELY ENDORSED FOUR CANDIDATES (THREE OF THEM FORMER CAN LAO PARTY MEMBERS): TRAN LOC, PHAM VAN NHU, LE VAN DIEM, AND ARVN MAJOR NGUYEN HUU HOANG. THIS ENDORSEMENT IS NOT DEFINITVE BECAUSE A GSF ADVISORY

BODY COMPOSED OF CLERGYMEN HAD NOT PASSED JUDGMENT ON THESE CHOICES AS OF OCT 14. WITH SEVEN OTHER CATHOLICS IN THE RACE THERE COULD BE SOME LAST MINUTE SWITCHES.

A. THE LEADING CATHOLIC CANDIDATE, AND PERHAPS THE STRONGEST CANDIDATE OF ALL, IS TRAN LOC FROM HOAI NHON DISTRICT OF BINH DINH. DURING THE DIEM ERA, LOC WAS CHIEF OF PHU CAT AND THEN TUY PHUOC DISTRICTS IN BINH DINH AND FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PROVINCIAL CAN LAO PARTY. DESPITE HIS CAN LAO CONNECTIONS, LOC IS FONDLY RECALLED EVEN OUTSIE OF CATHOLIC CIRCLES FOR HIS HONESTY, EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION AND RELATIVE FAIRNESS TO NON-CATHOLICS, A MARKED CONTRAST TO MANY OTHER CAN LAO LEASERS. HOWEVER, AT THE TIME OF BINH DINH'S VIOLENT ANTI-GOVERNMENT NATIONAL SALVATION MOVEMENT IN 1964, LOC WAS FORCED TO FLEE THE PROVINCE. LOC'S PRESENT POSITION IS ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE CHIEF OF LONG AN PROVINCE.

B. LE VAN DIEN, LIKE LOC, WAS BORN IN HOAI NHON DISTRICT, IS CATHOLIC AND A FORMER MEMBER OF THE CAN LOA PARTY, BUT DIEN IS MUCH MORE CONTROVERSIAL. DURING THE DIEM ERA, DIEN WAS DISTRICT CHIEF OF AN NHON (55-56) AND WHEN

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CHIEF OF THE PROVINCIAL SECURITY OFFICE UNTIL 1963. DIEN IS GENERALLY REMEMBERED AS AN IMPLACABLE FOE OF COMMUNISM WHO ALLEGEDLY HAS KILLED MANY VIET CONG AND, IT IS SAID, OVER BINH DINH, TEMPORARILY SEIZING CONTROL OF THE PROVINCE IN 1964, DIEN WHO LET THE PRO-GOVERNMENT FORCES (MOSTLY CATHOLICS AND VNQDD), WAS THROWN IN JAIL. THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE IN BINH DINH WHO HATE DIEN BUT HE DOES HAVE APPEAL WITH SOME CATHOLICS AND OLD CAN LAO MEMBERS.

C. PHAM VAN NHU HAS RECEIVED THE WHOLE-HEARTED SUPPORT OF BOTH FATHER SO AND THE GSF. NHU IS ALSO EX-CAN LAO AND A FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY UNDER DIEM. HIS MAJOR WEAKNESS IS UNFAMILIARITY WITH THE PROVINCE, HAVING ARRIVED IN BINH DINH ONLY EIGHT MONTHS AGO.

D. NGUYEN HUU HOANG, AN ARVN MAJOR, IS A NATIVE OF BINH DINH NOW STATIONED IN SAIGON. HE IS NOT WIDELY KNOWN.

10. NOT RUNNING THIS YEAR IS PHAM CHAU TUAN, ONE OF BINH DINH'S CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES. TUAN, A CATHOLIC,

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WON LST YEAR WITH GSF SUPPORT. GSF WITHHELD ENDORSEMENT THIS TIME BECAUSE DURING THE DISPUTE OVER A "SURPREME BEING" CLAUSE IN THE CONSTITUTION, TUAN DID NOT SPEAK OUT IN FAVOR OF ITS INSERTION.

11. BINH DINH'S 6,000 MEMBER CVT LABOR ORGANIZATION IS BACKING TWO DANDIDATES, NGO KHUONG, A CVT CHAIRMAN AND NGUYEN DUY KHIEM, A CVT ADVISOR. BOTH MAY RECEIVE A FAIR AMOUNT OF NON-UNION SUPPORT. NGO KHUONG IST THE FATHER OF GENERAL NGO DZU, DEPUTY TO GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG. KHUONG ALSO MADE MANY FRIENDS AS A RESPECTED CHIEF OF THE BUNH DINH AGRICULTURAL CRED.. SERVICE. KHIEM IS A CATHOLIC AND ALTHOUGH NOT OFFICIALLY SUPPORTED BY THE GSF WILL PRO-

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BABLY DRAW SOME CATHOLIC VOTES AS FATHER SO LIKES HIM.

12. THE KY BO FACTION OF THE VNQDD IS BACKING ITS NEW SRECRETARY, PROFESSOR NGUYEN HUU THOI AS WELL AS BUI LONG THIEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL. THIEN ALSO IS A PARTY MEMBER. NEITHER APPEAR TO HAVE MUCH CHANCE.

13. THE NGUYEN TUONG TAM FACTION OF THE VNQDDD HAS ITS LEADER LUONG HAI IN THE RACE. HAI WAS ELECTED TO THE CONSTUTUENT ASSEMBLY AND AS MANY CA DEPUTIES, SUFFERS

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FROM THE ONUS OF HAVING DONE "NOTHING FOR THE PEOPLE OF BINH DINH." SIMILAR CRTICISM IS ALSO LEVELLED AT THE OTHER BINH DINH CA DEPUTY RUNNING AGAIN, NGO VAN NHAM.

14. NGUEYN DONG, 57, A LONG TIME BINH DINH PUBLIC SERVANT AND CURRENTLY CHIEF OF THE PROVINICAL POLITICAL OFFICE, IS THE STRONGEST INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE. DONG IS WIDELY KNOWN AND ADMIRED AS A SCRUPULOSSLY HONEST, DEDICATED AND PERSONABLE OFFICIAL. HIS MAIN CAMPAIGN PROMISES ARE TO REDUCE CORRUPTING AND INFLATION AND TO INCREASE AND ACCELERATE INDEMNIFICATION PAYMENTS FOR WAR DAMAGES. DONG SERVED AS CHIEF OF BINH KHE AND HOAI NHON DISTRICTS 1956-60. HE REPORTEDLY RAN AFOUT OF NGO DINH CAN AND SPENT THE NEXT THREE YEARS IN JAIL.

15. MAJOR PHAN VAN PHU FINISHED FAR DOWN THE LIST IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS LAST YEAR. AS BINH DINH RD CHIEF, A POSITION HE HELD UNTIL JULY, PHU WASS INEFFECTIVE AND UNCOOPERATIVE WITH AMERICAN ADVISORS. MOREOVER, FORMER BINH DINH PROVINCE CHIEF LT COL TRAN DINH VONG WHO APPOINTED PHU AND WAS SAID TO BE SUPPORTING HIM FOR THE LOWER HOUSE, WAS DISMISSED IN SEPTEMBER FOR CORRUPTION. PHU'S SYMBOL IS A DOVE.
BUNKER

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